CHARLTON COMICS
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# Gunfighters

12¢

don't miss...
"THE COWARD"

# EXCLUSIVE FUN PRODUCTS *by mail*

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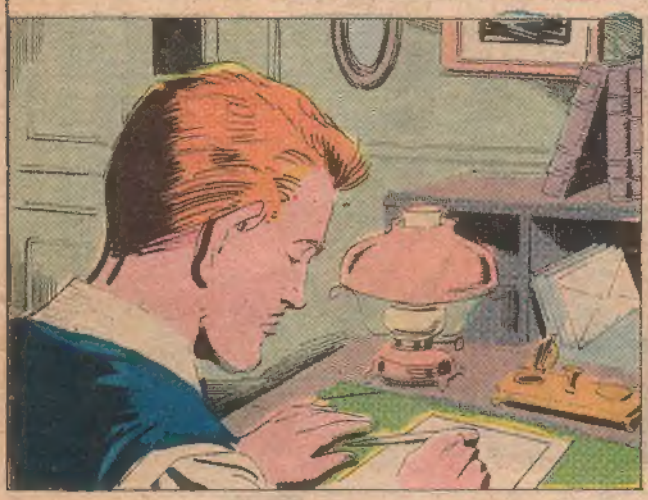
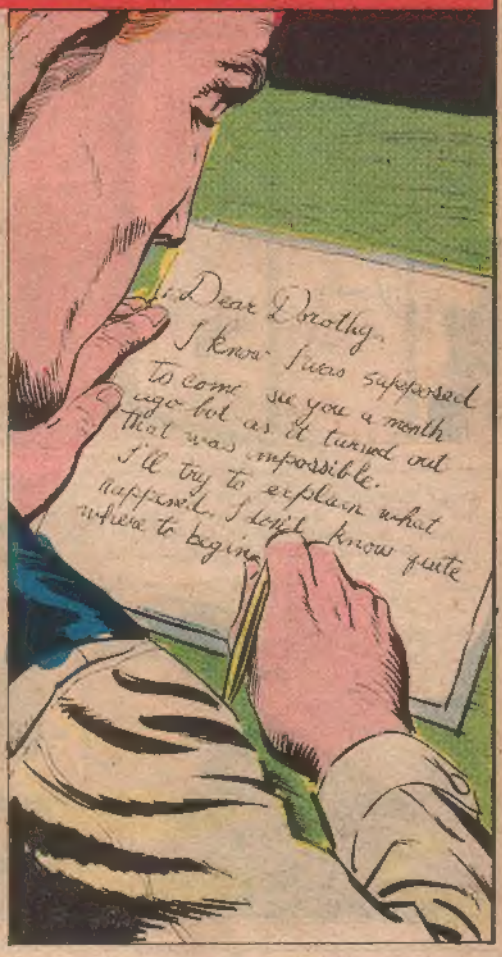
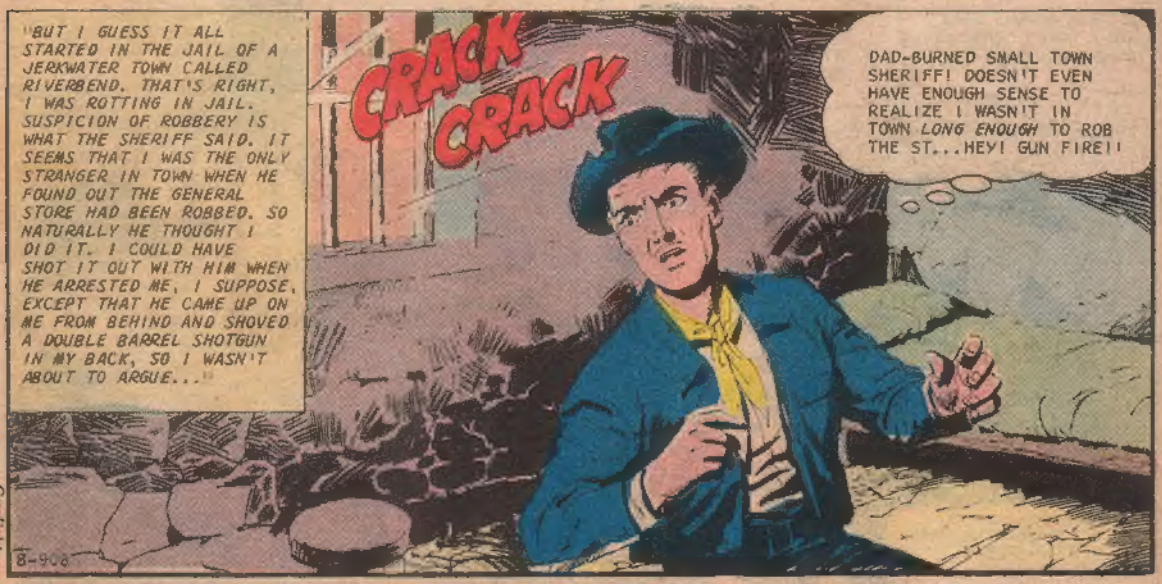
# THE HERO




Dear Dorothy.
I know I was supposed to come see you a month ago but as it turned out that was impossible.
I'll try to explain what happened. I don't know quite where to begin.


"BUT I GUESS IT ALL STARTED IN THE JAIL OF A JERKWATER TOWN CALLED RIVERBEND. THAT'S RIGHT, I WAS ROTTING IN JAIL. SUSPICION OF ROBBERY IS WHAT THE SHERIFF SAID. IT SEEMS THAT I WAS THE ONLY STRANGER IN TOWN WHEN HE FOUND OUT THE GENERAL STORE HAD BEEN ROBBED. SO NATURALLY HE THOUGHT I DID IT. I COULD HAVE SHOT IT OUT WITH HIM WHEN HE ARRESTED ME, I SUPPOSE, EXCEPT THAT HE CAME UP ON ME FROM BEHIND AND SHOVED A DOUBLE BARREL SHOTGUN IN MY BACK, SO I WASN'T ABOUT TO ARGUE..."
CRACK CRACK
DAD-BURNED SMALL TOWN SHERIFF! DOESN'T EVEN HAVE ENOUGH SENSE TO REALIZE I WASN'T IN TOWN *LONG ENOUGH* TO ROB THE ST...HEY! GUN FIRE!!
8-906



GUNFIGHTERS Vol. 3, No. 52 October, 1967, is published four times yearly by Charlton Comics Group, Charlton Building, Derby, Conn. 06418

WELL, WELL! A SHOOT-OUT AT THE BANK! 'PEARS I MIGHT BE HAVING SOME COMPANY IN A WHILE!
BANK
THAT IS, IF THE SHERIFF CAN GIT HIS BRAIN WORKING LONG ENOUGH TO FIGURE A WAY TO TAKE THEM OWLHOOTS!
AS IT TURNED OUT THE SHERIFF BROUGHT IN ONE OF THEM. THE OTHER THREE GOT CLEAN AWAY.
YOU'VE GOT SOME COMPANY, MISTER! WATCH YOUR STEP! HE'S A MEAN ONE!
YOU WON'T KEEP ME HERE! MY BOYS'LL BE BACK TO SPRING ME.
OL' TIN STAR'S SURE GOT A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR, DON'T HE?
SHUT-UP, MISTER, AND LEMME THINK! GOTTA FIGURE A WAY TA BUST OUTA HERE!
I THOUGHT YUH SAID YER BOYS WERE COMIN' BACK!
YEH, THEY MIGHT! BUT I DOUBT IT! LEWT'S BEEN LOOKING FOR A WAY TO TAKE OVER THE GANG! AND THIS IS HIS CHANCE! I'VE GOTTA GIT BACK AND SHOW 'EM I'M STILL BOSS!
YOU OWLHOOTS SURE HAVE YER PROB-LEMS, DON'T YUH?

YOU'RE A MOUTHY KID! I OUGHTA SLAP YUH AROUND A BIT! WHAT DO YUH CALL YERSELF, ANYWAY?
MURDOCK! JED MURDOCK!
SO! HEARD TELL OF YOU! YORE SUPPOSED TUH BE MIGHTY FAST WITH YER IRONS! I THOUGHT YOU RODE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW! WHAT ARE YUH DOIN' IN HERE?
TO TELL YUH THE TRUTH, I'M AN INNOCENT VICTIM OF FAULTY JUSTICE!
OH YEH, SURE. SO AM I... INNOCENT AS A NEW BORN BABE!
NOW, C'MON! GIMME A HAND! MEBBE WE CAN FIGURE A WAY TO BOTH BREAK OUT!
WHEN DO THEY SERVE UP THE GRUB AROUND HERE? THEY'LL HAVE TUH OPEN THE DOOR, THEN! SO, MEBBE...
I WANTED TO GET OUT OF THIS JAIL AS MUCH AS MY OWLHOOT FRIEND DID, I HAD SOME BUSINESS TO TEND TO IN OAKCREEK, SO I DECIDED TO PLAY ALONG! I TOLD HIM ABOUT THE GIRL THAT CAME OVER WITH THE GRUB AND WE DEVISED OURSELVES A PLAN...
AND HERE'S YOURS, SIR!
FEH! WHO WANTS THAT SLOP!!
BESSIE! STEP BACK! AWAY FROM HIM! DON'T LET HIM GRABBA HOLDA YOU!
WE FIGURED THE SHERIFF WOULD BE READY FOR US IF WE GRABBED THE GIRL AND USED HER FOR COVER, SO WE HAD US A DIFFERENT PLAN.
TAKE ONE MORE STEP TOWARD THAT OPEN DOOR, VARGOS, AND YORE FINISHED!
GOT TO MOVE SLOW! CAN'T LET THE SHERIFF SEE WHAT I'M UP TO!
THE SHERIFF WAS STARTING TO CLOSE THE DOOR NOW...
YOU'VE GOT A PURTY DIRTY CELL HERE, SHERIFF! YOU OUGHT TO CLEAN UP THIS SLOP!
LISTEN, VARGOS! I'VE GOT HALF A MIND TO SAVE THE JUDGE A TRIP HERE BY PLUGGING YOU NOW!
THAT'S IT, FRIEND. KEEP THE SHERIFF'S ATTENTION ON YOU!
GOTTA WAIT TILL THE SHERIFF'S GUN ISN'T POINTING DIRECTLY AT VARGOS!
3

VARGOS HAD THE SHERIFF'S GUN NOW AND I HAD PICKED ANOTHER UP OFF THE DESK! WE WERE ON OUR WAY OUT!
I'M TAKING THE GIRL WITH US...AS A HOSTAGE!!
LET GO!
NO VARGOS! WE DON'T NEED HER!
SHUT-UP! I'LL DECIDE WHAT WE NEED!

THERE WAS NO STOPPING HIM! AND BESIDES, THERE WAS NO TIME TO ARGUE. WE HAD TO GET OUT OF TOWN FAST!
ALL RIGHT, BOYS! YOU'VE GONE FAR ENOUGH!
HUH?

IT WAS THE SLOP-COVERED SHERIFF! I WAS BEHIND COVER NOW, SO HE HAD HIS SHOT GUN AIMED AT VARGOS AND THE GIRL!
YOU WON'T SHOOT, SHERIFF! YUH'LL KILL THE GIRL IF YOU DO!

CONTINUED AFTER THE NEXT PAGE

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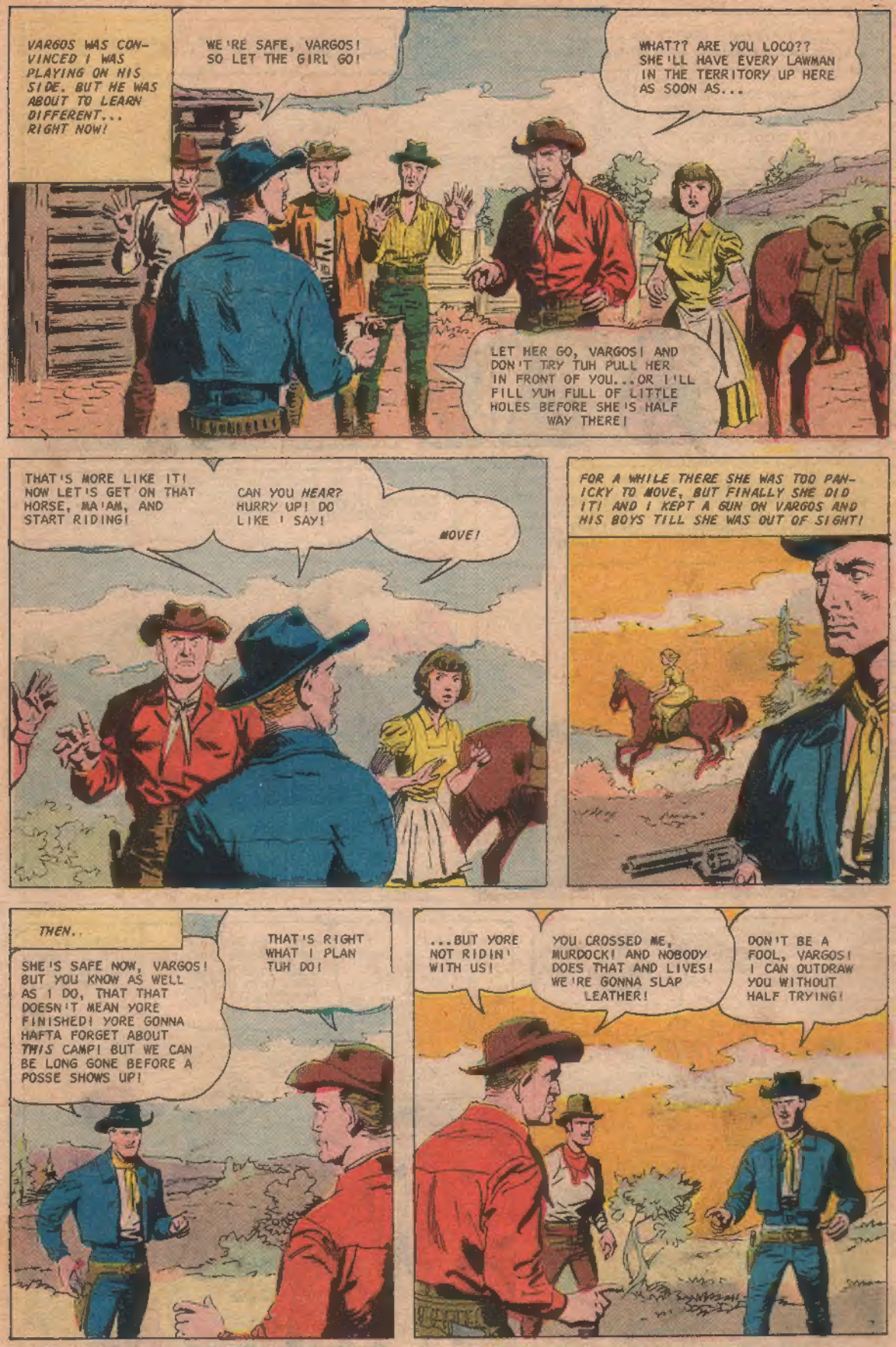
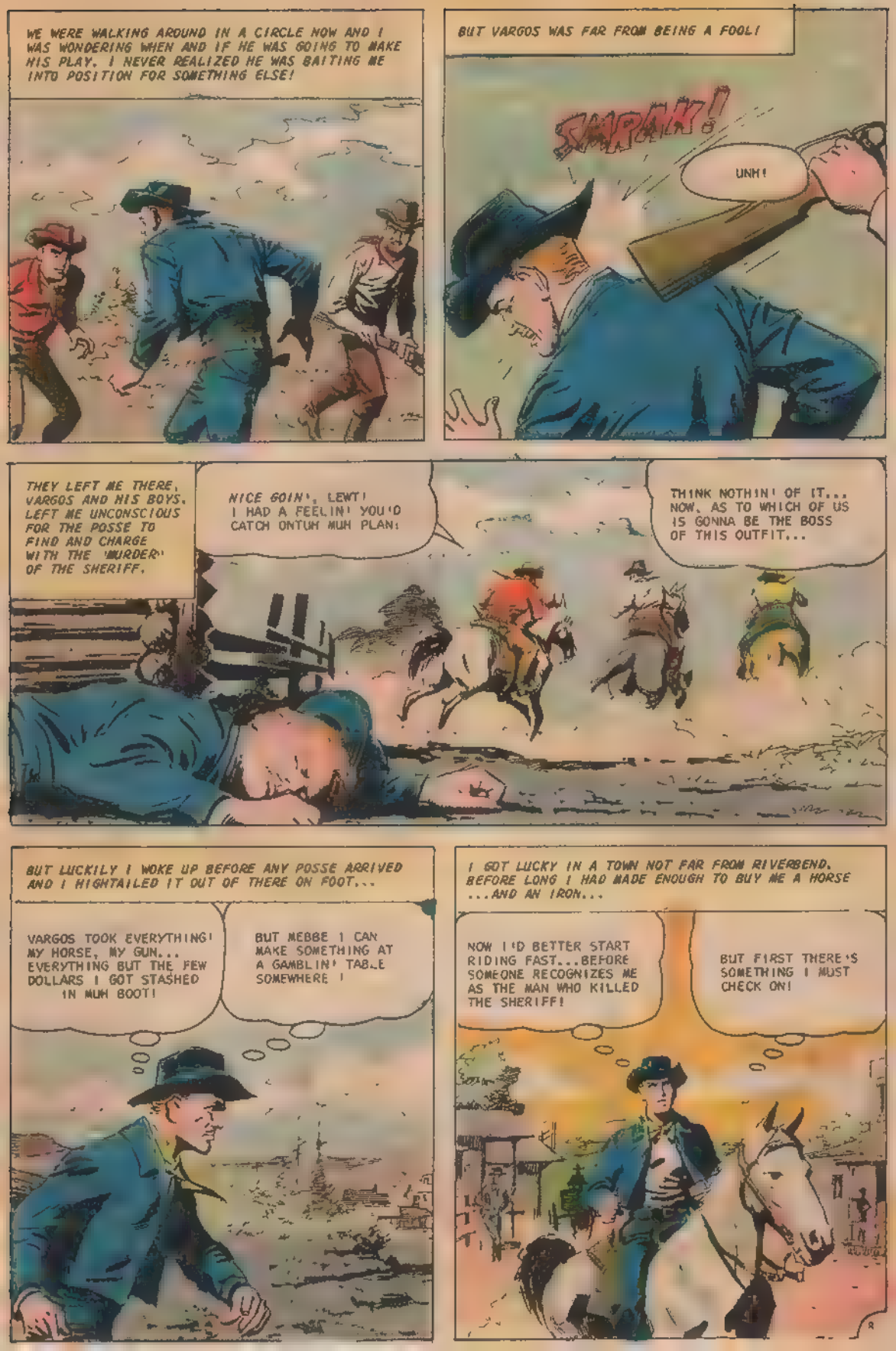
BUT THE SHERIFF'S FINGER WAS TIGHTENING ON THE TRIGGER. THE FOOL WAS GOING TO SHOOT ANYWAY, AND THE GIRL WAS SURE TO BE KILLED. I HAD TO STOP HIM. AND THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO DO IT!
Y-YOU KILLED HIM! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A COLD-BLOODED KILLER!
SHUT-UP!
SOME GIRL! I JUST SAVED HER LIFE AND SHE WAS CALLING ME A KILLER. BUT SHE WAS RIGHT. I HAD KILLED HIM. I ONLY AIMED TO WOUND, BUT MY AIM HAD BEEN OFF!
DON'T JES STAND THERE ADMIRIN' YER HANDIWORK! WE'VE GOTTA RIDE OUTA HERE...FAST!
VARGOS WAS RIGHT! THE TOWNS PEOPLE WERE UP IN ARMS NOW! AND WE WERE DODGING BULLETS!
OKAY, VARGOS! YOU'VE BEEN CALLING THE SHOTS SO FAR! NOW WHERE TO?
JES FOLLOW ME! MY BOYS ARE WAITING FOR ME... UP IN THE HILLS!
THE OUTLAW CAMP WASN'T MUCH...JUST AN OLD DESERTED HERMIT'S CABIN OR SOMETHING! AS FOR THE "BOYS" THEY DIDN'T GIVE US QUITE THE RECEPTION I HAD EXPECTED!
GIT OFF YER HORSE, VARGOS! AND WALK UP NICE AND SLOW! THAT GOES FOR YOU TOO, STRANGER! AND THE GIRL!
YORE GONNA HAFTA LEARN TUH TAKE ORDERS FROM ME FROM NOW ON, VARGOS!
PUT THAT RIFLE AWAY, LEWT! I'M STILL THE BOSS OF THIS OUTFIT!

VARGOS HAD A LITTLE SURPRISE OF HIS OWN! AND I WAS JUST AS SURPRISED AS EVERYONE ELSE!
THIS IS MY NEW BOY, JED MURDOCK! AND ANY OF YOU WHO SAYS I'M NOT HEADMAN IS GONNA HAFTA SHOOT IT OUT WITH HIM!
NOW, WAIT A MINUTE, VARGOS...
I WAS GOING TO TELL HIM I WANTED NO PART OF HIS FIGHT WHEN...
WHA-?
BLAM
THAT'S JUST A WARNING, MISTER! YOU MAY BE FAST WITH A GUN BUT THAT MEANS NOTHING WHEN SOMEONE'S GOT THE DROP ON YOU!
WELL, WELL! AND DID YOU FIGURE THAT OUT ALL BY YOURSELF?
BECAUSE IF YOU DID, YOU FIGURED ALL WRONG!
BLAM
I WAS MAD NOW, AND I WAS GOING TO LET THIS OWLHOOT KNOW IT!
YOW! MUH HAND!
CRAK!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS!
I DOUBT IT!
NOW, THE REST OF YOU...THROW DOWN YER GUNS SO'S WE CAN TALK THIS OUT... PEACEFUL-LIKE!
GOOD WORK, JED! I KNEW YUH WOULDN'T LET ME DOWN!

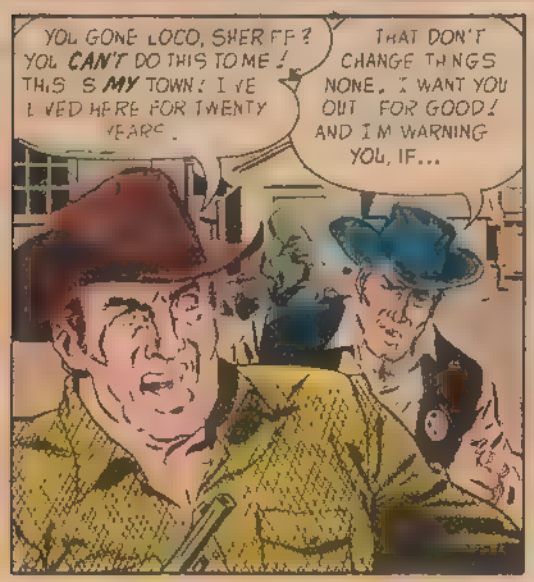

VARGOS WAS CONVINCED I WAS PLAYING ON HIS SIDE. BUT HE WAS ABOUT TO LEARN DIFFERENT... RIGHT NOW!
WE'RE SAFE, VARGOS! SO LET THE GIRL GO!
WHAT?? ARE YOU LOCO?? SHE'LL HAVE EVERY LAWMAN IN THE TERRITORY UP HERE AS SOON AS...
LET HER GO, VARGOS! AND DON'T TRY TUH PULL HER IN FRONT OF YOU...OR I'LL FILL YUH FULL OF LITTLE HOLES BEFORE SHE'S HALF WAY THERE!
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT! NOW LET'S GET ON THAT HORSE, MA'AM, AND START RIDING!
CAN YOU HEAR? HURRY UP! DO LIKE I SAY!
MOVE!
FOR A WHILE THERE SHE WAS TOO PANICKY TO MOVE, BUT FINALLY SHE DID IT! AND I KEPT A GUN ON VARGOS AND HIS BOYS TILL SHE WAS OUT OF SIGHT!
THEN..
SHE'S SAFE NOW, VARGOS! BUT YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO, THAT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YORE FINISHED! YORE GONNA HAFTA FORGET ABOUT THIS CAMP! BUT WE CAN BE LONG GONE BEFORE A POSSE SHOWS UP!
THAT'S RIGHT WHAT I PLAN TUH DO!
...BUT YORE NOT RIDIN' WITH US!
YOU CROSSED ME, MURDOCK! AND NOBODY DOES THAT AND LIVES! WE'RE GONNA SLAP LEATHER!
DON'T BE A FOOL, VARGOS! I CAN OUTDRAW YOU WITHOUT HALF TRYING!


WE WERE WALKING AROUND IN A CIRCLE NOW AND I WAS WONDERING WHEN AND IF HE WAS GOING TO MAKE HIS PLAY. I NEVER REALIZED HE WAS BAITING ME INTO POSITION FOR SOMETHING ELSE!
BUT VARGOS WAS FAR FROM BEING A FOOL!
SMRAK!
UNH!
THEY LEFT ME THERE, VARGOS AND HIS BOYS. LEFT ME UNCONSCIOUS FOR THE POSSE TO FIND AND CHARGE WITH THE 'MURDER' OF THE SHERIFF.
NICE GOIN', LEWT! I HAD A FEELIN' YOU'D CATCH ONTUH MUH PLAN!
THINK NOTHIN' OF IT... NOW, AS TO WHICH OF US IS GONNA BE THE BOSS OF THIS OUTFIT...
BUT LUCKILY I WOKE UP BEFORE ANY POSSE ARRIVED AND I HIGHTAILED IT OUT OF THERE ON FOOT...
VARGOS TOOK EVERYTHING! MY HORSE, MY GUN... EVERYTHING BUT THE FEW DOLLARS I GOT STASHED IN MUH BOOT!
BUT MEBBE I CAN MAKE SOMETHING AT A GAMBLIN' TABLE SOMEWHERE!
I GOT LUCKY IN A TOWN NOT FAR FROM RIVERBEND. BEFORE LONG I HAD MADE ENOUGH TO BUY ME A HORSE ...AND AN IRON...
NOW I'D BETTER START RIDING FAST...BEFORE SOMEONE RECOGNIZES ME AS THE MAN WHO KILLED THE SHERIFF!
BUT FIRST THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST CHECK ON!

I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR ALONG THE TRAIL OUT OF TOWN...
I WAS AFRAID OF THIS! SOMEONE PUT A REWARD OUT FOR ME! AND SOMEONE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH WHEN I SHOT THE SHERIFF TO GIVE 'EM A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF ME!
NOW I CAN'T GO TO OAK-CREEK! NOT NOW THAT I'M A HUNTED MAN!
WHY DON'T YOU TELL HER THE WHOLE STORY?
HEY! Y'KNOW, IT'S *IMPOLITE* TO READ OVER SOMEONE'S SHOULDER!
WHY DON'T YOU TELL HER HOW YOU WERE CAUGHT, BROUGHT TO TRIAL AND PROVEN INNOCENT WHEN I TESTIFIED IN YOUR BEHALF?
NO! IT'S BETTER THIS WAY!
I KNOW DOROTHY! SHE'D RATHER BELIEVE ANY-THING THAN THINK THAT SOME OTHER WOMAN STOLE ME FROM HER!
AND I REALLY DON'T WANNA GIT HER TOO URSET!
WELL NOW! YOU SOUND LIKE YOU MIGHT BE A BIT *AFRAID* OF THIS GIRL!
YEH, I GUESS I AM, A BIT! GUN-FIGHTERS, I CAN HANDLE! BUT WOMEN ...THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO FIGURE OUT!
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT THEY'RE GONNA END UP DOING! OR WHAT THEY'RE GONNA GET YOU INTO!
UH...THAT REMINDS ME, DEAR! THE SUPPER DISHES ARE STILL IN THE SINK...
THE END

# THE COWARD

THERE WAS NO WAY THE SHERIFF COULD STOP THE FIGHT. THE TWO MEN WERE ALREADY GOING FOR THEIR GUNS BY THE TIME HE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE. BUT ONCE THAT FIRST FATEFUL SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED...


YOU GONE LOCO, SHERIFF? YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! THIS IS MY TOWN! I'VE LIVED HERE FOR TWENTY YEARS.
THAT DON'T CHANGE THINGS NONE. I WANT YOU OUT FOR GOOD! AND I'M WARNING YOU, IF...

HOLD IT A MINUTE! LET'S TALK THIS OVER! WHAT'S GOT YOU SO RILED ANYWAY? I GUNNED THIS BOY FAIR AND SQUARE, DIDN'T I? HE DREW FIRST, RIGHT?
YEH SURE! BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE AND YOU KNEW IT! HE WAS JUST A KID! AND THE WAY I HEAR IT, YOU GOADED HIM INTO THIS FIGHT JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT!

CONTINUED AFTER THE NEXT PAGE

# see through walls

the man from U.N.C.L.E.

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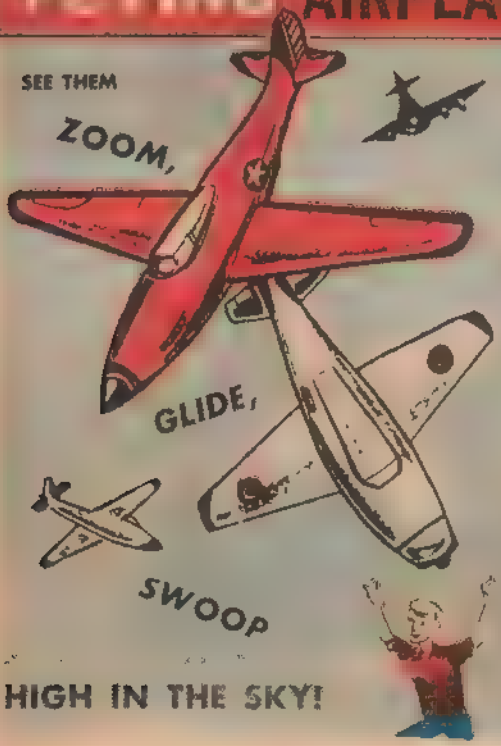


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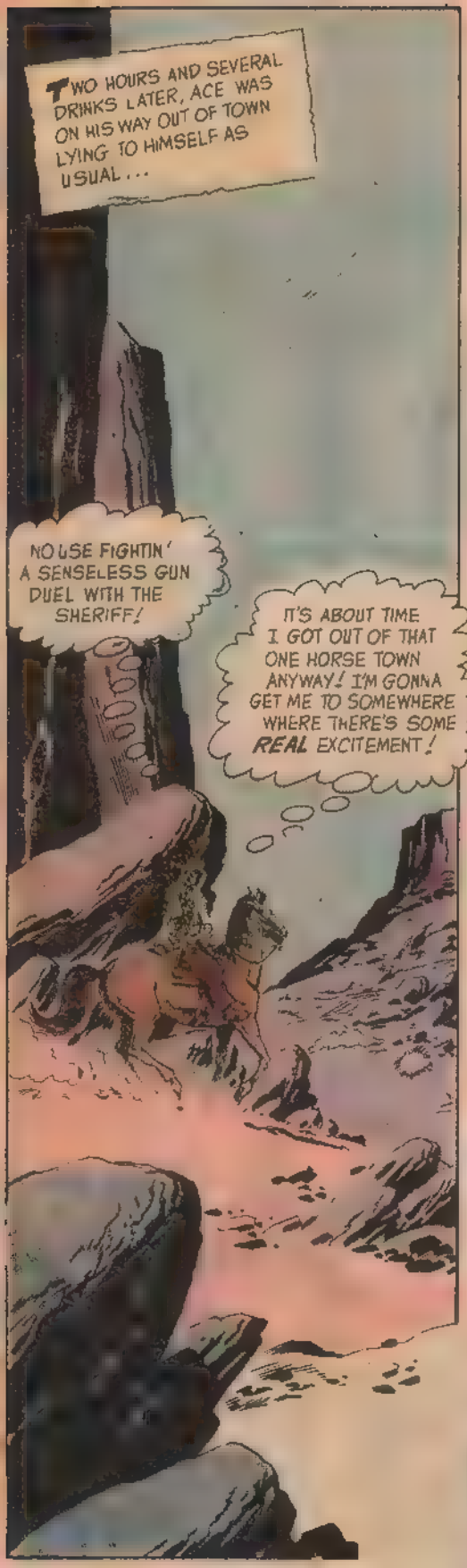
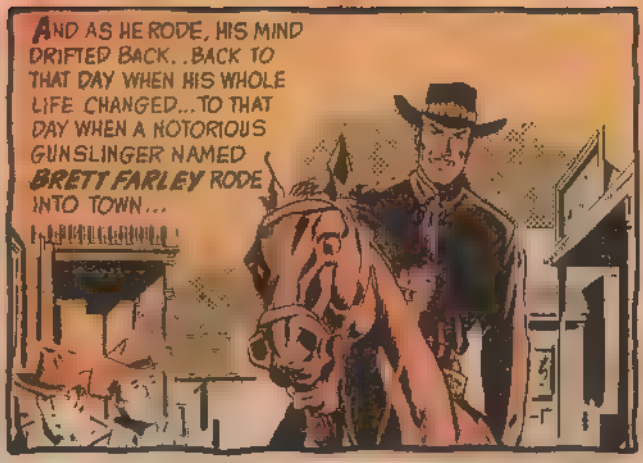
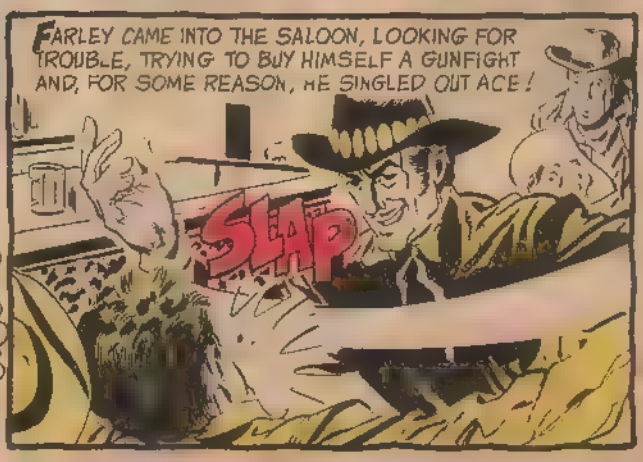
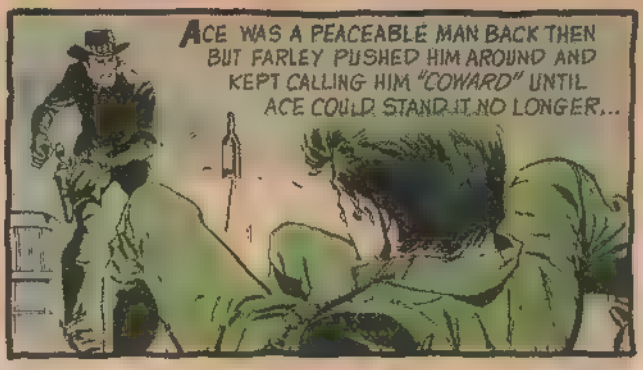
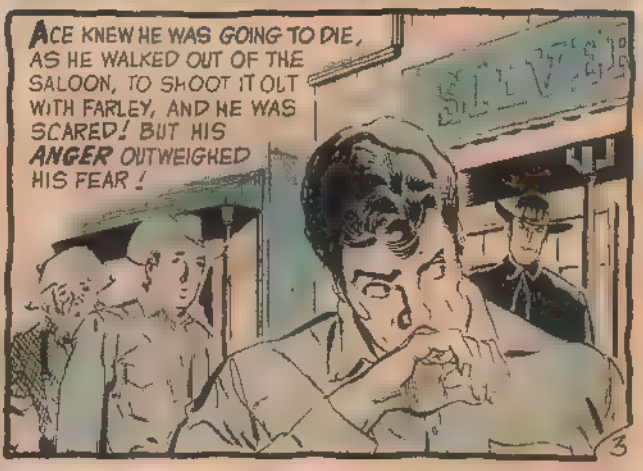
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU, EVANS... YOU WERE A PEACEABLE MAN ONCE! BUT NOW...
SKIP THE SERMON, SHERIFF, AND GIT TO THE POINT!
OKAY! THIS IS THE POINT!! IF YOU'RE NOT OUT OF HERE COME SUNDOWN, I'LL COME GUNNIN' FOR YUH! AND YOU WON'T FIND ME EASY TO BEAT AS SOME KID!
WELL NOW... SOUNDS LIKE YORE MIND'S ALL MADE UP, ISN'T IT, SHERIFF?
YOU KNOW, I TH NK I WILL STICK AROUND! A GUNFIGHT WITH YOU MAY BE JUST WHAT I NEED!
YOU MADE YERSELF QU TE A REP BEFORE YOU TURNED LAWMAN! WHEN I OUTDRAW YOU... I'LL REALLY MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF!
THE NO GOOD COWARD! HE WON'T BE STAYIN' AROUND! HE'D NEVER TAKE ON SOMEONE HE WASN'T SURE HE COULD BEAT!
HEADING BACK TO THE SALOON, ACE EVANS PASSED BY THE MAN HE HAD JUST GUNNED DOWN, AND...
WHY, ACE, WHY? MATT LOOKED UP TO YOU! HE WAS A FRIEND OF YOURS!
HE ASKED FOR IT... THAT'S WHY! HE BACK-TALKED ME! AND NOBODY DOES THAT TO ACE EVANS!
THEN, HE CONTINUED ON TOWARD THE SWINGING DOORS AND NO ONE NOTICED THE SHAKEN EXPRESSION ON H S FACE... AN EXPRESSION OF FEAR AND WORRY..
WHAT'S BOTHERIN' ME? CAN T BE THE SHERIFF! I CAN TAKE 'IM I KNOW I CAN!
BUT... WHAT IF I DON'T? WHEW, I SURE NEED ME A DRINK!!
2


TWO HOURS AND SEVERAL DRINKS LATER, ACE WAS ON HIS WAY OUT OF TOWN LYING TO HIMSELF AS USUAL...
NO USE FIGHTIN' A SENSELESS GUN DUEL WITH THE SHERIFF!
IT'S ABOUT TIME I GOT OUT OF THAT ONE HORSE TOWN ANYWAY! I'M GONNA GET ME TO SOMEWHERE WHERE THERE'S SOME REAL EXCITEMENT!


AND AS HE RODE, HIS MIND DRIFTED BACK..BACK TO THAT DAY WHEN HIS WHOLE LIFE CHANGED...TO THAT DAY WHEN A NOTORIOUS GUNSLINGER NAMED BRETT FARLEY RODE INTO TOWN...

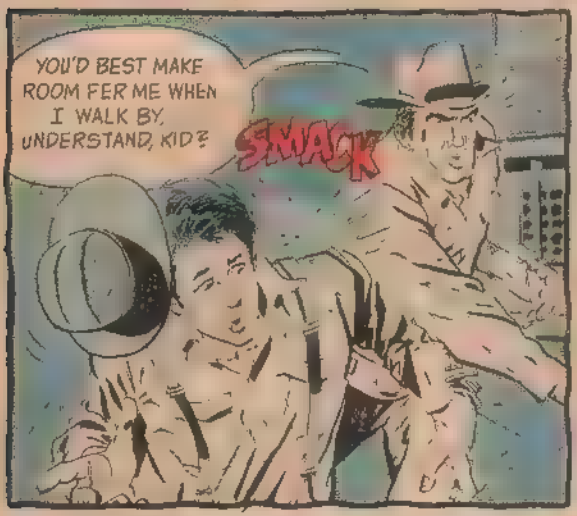

FARLEY CAME INTO THE SALOON, LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, TRYING TO BUY HIMSELF A GUNFIGHT AND, FOR SOME REASON, HE SINGLED OUT ACE!
SLAP


ACE WAS A PEACEABLE MAN BACK THEN BUT FARLEY PUSHED HIM AROUND AND KEPT CALLING HIM "COWARD" UNTIL ACE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...


ACE KNEW HE WAS GOING TO DIE, AS HE WALKED OUT OF THE SALOON, TO SHOOT IT OUT WITH FARLEY, AND HE WAS SCARED! BUT HIS ANGER OUTWEIGHED HIS FEAR!

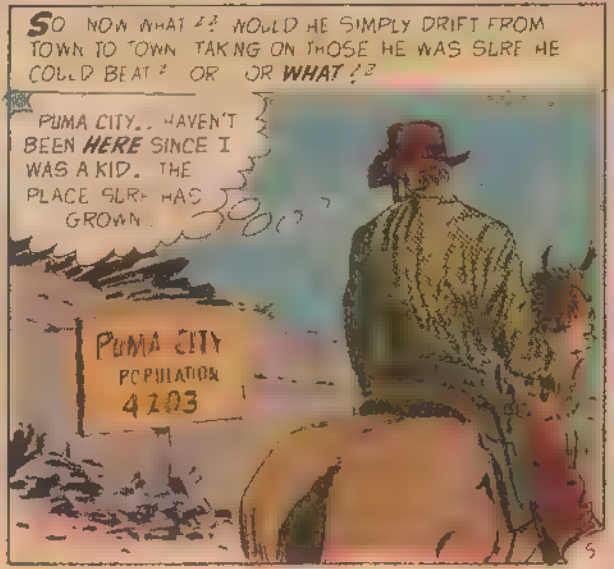
IT'S ALL OVER! FARLEY'S GOT HIM BEAT BY A COUNTRY MILE!
BUT LADY LUCK WAS WITH ACE THAT DAY! FARLEY OUTDREW ACE, OF COURSE! BUT BY A ONE IN A MILLION CHANCE, FARLEY'S SHOT MISSED...
ZING
AND EVEN THOUGH HIS HAND WAS SHAKING WORSE THAN EVER, ACE WAS ABLE TO SHOOT BEFORE FARLEY COULD FIRE AGAIN!
UUHHHH
SURE WAS GREAT SHOOTIN', ACE! I HAD ME A SUSPICION YUH COULD TAKE 'IM!
C'MON OVER TO THE PLACE, BOY! I'LL BUY YUH A COUPLE!
YOU KNOW, ACE YOU'LL MOST LIKELY TO BE FAMOUS NOW.. "THE MAN WHO SHOT BRETT FARLEY!"
YUH'LL PROBABLY BE WRIT UP IN HISTORY!
NAW! IT WASN'T ANYTHING! I WAS JUST LUCKY... THAT'S ALL!

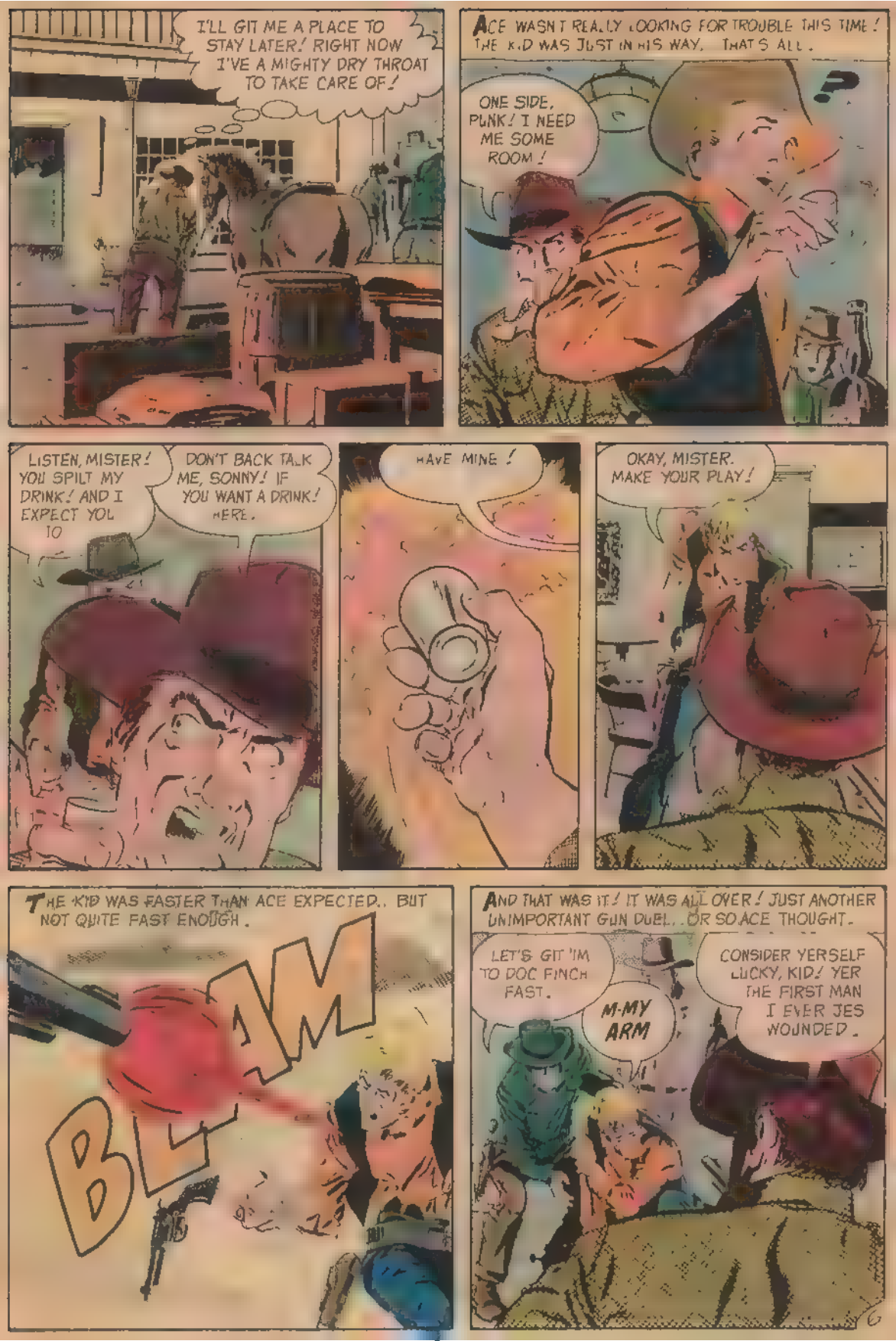
"IT WASN'T ANYTHING!" THAT WAS WHAT HE HAD SAID, BUT IT *DID* MEAN SOMETHING TO HIM BECAUSE FROM THEN ON HE WAS SOMEONE IMPORTANT AND HE DIDN'T LET ANYONE PUSH HIM AROUND!

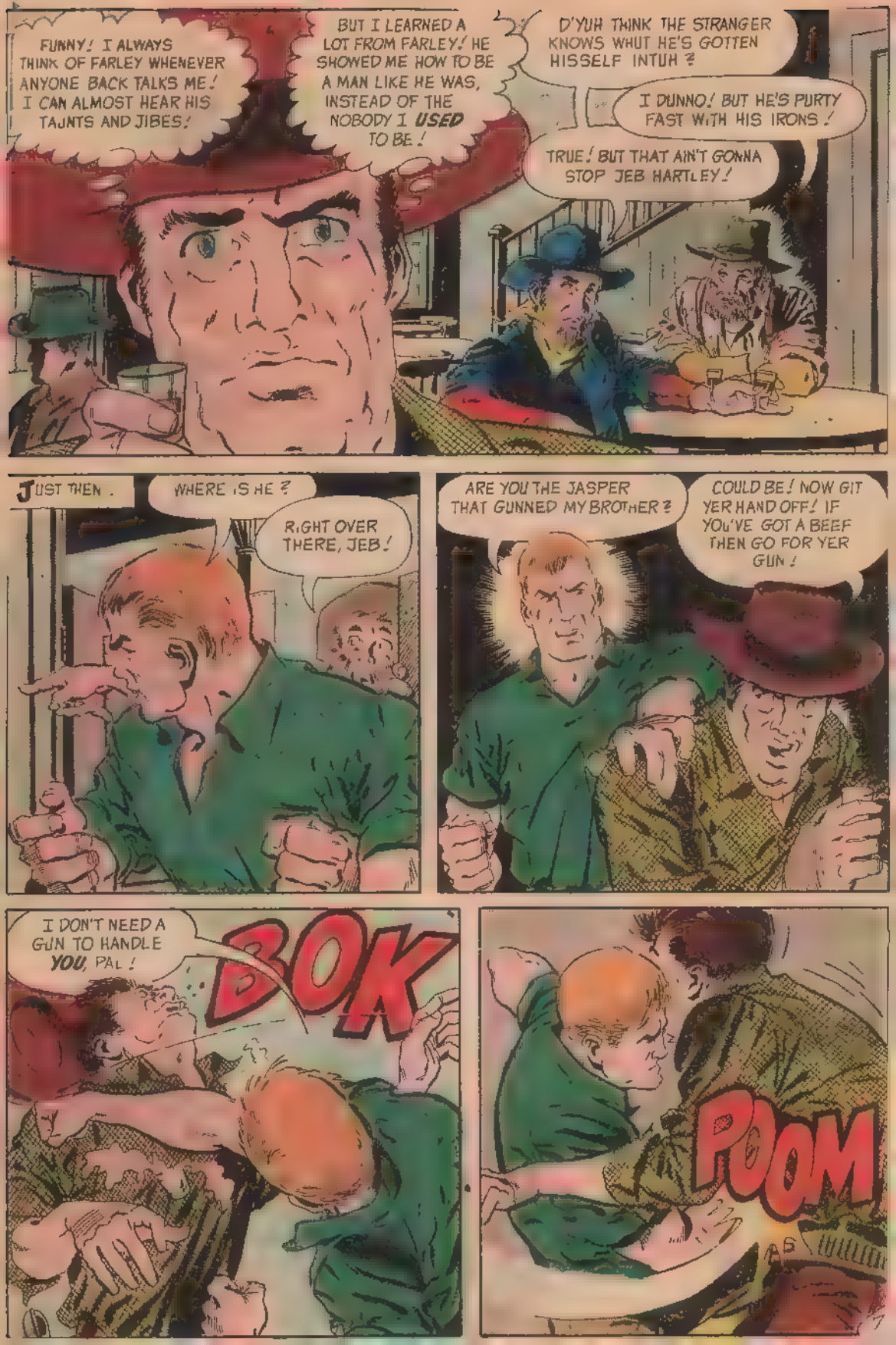


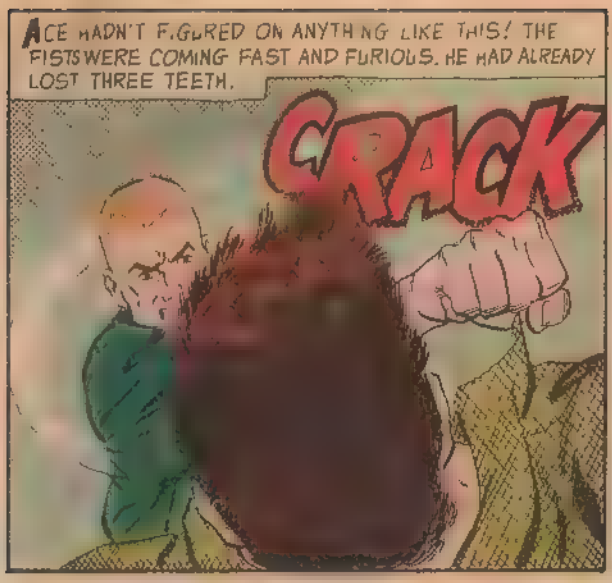
THEN CAME THE GUNFIGHTS. FIRST THERE WAS HINKLE. THEN CROSBY AND TARTA.
BANG
CRACK
POW
AND TODAY IT WAS MATT HOOPLE! IT WAS TOO BAD ABOUT YOUNG MRS. HOOPLE BUT MATT HAD ASKED FOR TROUBLE.

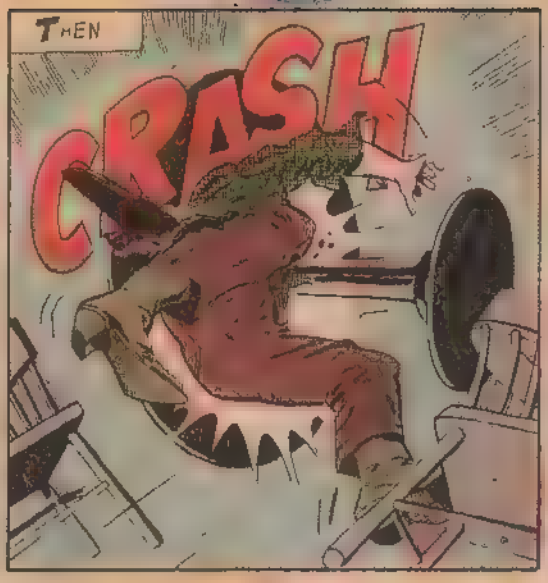
BUT NOW WHAT WOULD BECOME OF ACE EVANS? HE WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A BIG-NAME GUNFIGHTER BUT HE KNEW HE DIDN'T HAVE THE SPEED! AND SOMEWHERE DEEP INSIDE HIM, HE KNEW HE DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE EITHER!


SO NOW WHAT?? WOULD HE SIMPLY DRIFT FROM TOWN TO TOWN TAKING ON THOSE HE WAS SURE HE COULD BEAT? OR OR WHAT!?
PUMA CITY.. HAVEN'T BEEN HERE SINCE I WAS A KID. THE PLACE SURE HAS GROWN.
PUMA CITY
POPULATION
4103

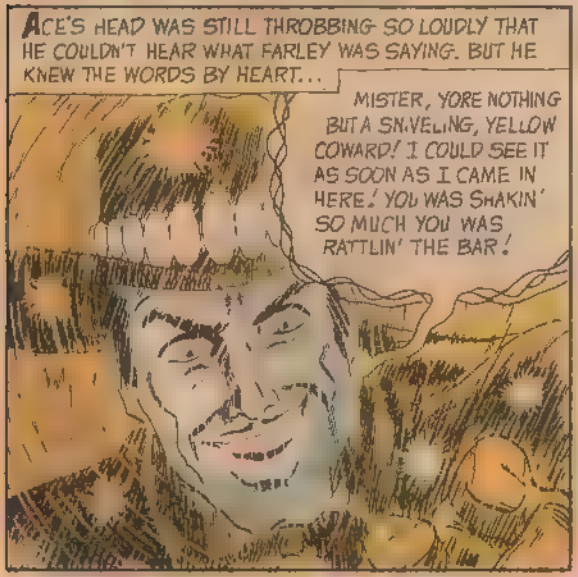

I'LL GIT ME A PLACE TO STAY LATER! RIGHT NOW I'VE A MIGHTY DRY THROAT TO TAKE CARE OF!
ACE WASN'T REALLY LOOKING FOR TROUBLE THIS TIME! THE KID WAS JUST IN HIS WAY. THAT'S ALL.
ONE SIDE, PUNK! I NEED ME SOME ROOM!
?
LISTEN, MISTER! YOU SPILT MY DRINK! AND I EXPECT YOU TO
DON'T BACK TALK ME, SONNY! IF YOU WANT A DRINK! HERE.
HAVE MINE!
OKAY, MISTER. MAKE YOUR PLAY!
THE KID WAS FASTER THAN ACE EXPECTED.. BUT NOT QUITE FAST ENOUGH.
BLAM
AND THAT WAS IT! IT WAS ALL OVER! JUST ANOTHER UNIMPORTANT GUN DUEL..OR SO ACE THOUGHT.
LET'S GIT 'IM TO DOC FINCH FAST.
M-MY ARM
CONSIDER YERSELF LUCKY, KID! YER THE FIRST MAN I EVER JES WOUNDED.


FUNNY! I ALWAYS THINK OF FARLEY WHENEVER ANYONE BACK TALKS ME! I CAN ALMOST HEAR HIS TAUNTS AND JIBES!
BUT I LEARNED A LOT FROM FARLEY! HE SHOWED ME HOW TO BE A MAN LIKE HE WAS, INSTEAD OF THE NOBODY I USED TO BE!
D'YUH THINK THE STRANGER KNOWS WHUT HE'S GOTTEN HISSELF INTUH?
I DUNNO! BUT HE'S PURTY FAST WITH HIS IRONS!
TRUE! BUT THAT AIN'T GONNA STOP JEB HARTLEY!
JUST THEN.
WHERE IS HE?
RIGHT OVER THERE, JEB!
ARE YOU THE JASPER THAT GUNNED MY BROTHER?
COULD BE! NOW GIT YER HAND OFF! IF YOU'VE GOT A BEEF THEN GO FOR YER GUN!
I DON'T NEED A GUN TO HANDLE YOU, PAL!
BOK
POOM


ACE HADN'T FIGURED ON ANYTHING LIKE THIS! THE FISTS WERE COMING FAST AND FURIOUS. HE HAD ALREADY LOST THREE TEETH.
CRACK


THEN
CRASH

MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE DRINKS HE HAD HAD. MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE THE BLOWS HAD DRIVEN HIM HALF DELIRIOUS OR MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE HIS FACE WAS SO SWOLLEN THAT HIS EYES WERE HALF SHUT AND HE COULD HARDLY SEE. BUT, IN ANY EVENT, HIS MIND'S EYE TOOK OVER AND ACE NO LONGER SAW THE MAN NAMED JEB. NOW IT WAS BRETT FARLEY WHO STOOD BEFORE HIM!
HA
HA HA
HA HA


ACE'S HEAD WAS STILL THROBBING SO LOUDLY THAT HE COULDN'T HEAR WHAT FARLEY WAS SAYING. BUT HE KNEW THE WORDS BY HEART...
MISTER, YORE NOTHING BUT A SNIVELING, YELLOW COWARD! I COULD SEE IT AS SOON AS I CAME IN HERE! YOU WAS SHAKIN' SO MUCH YOU WAS RATTLIN' THE BAR!

I SINGLED YOU OUT TO GIVE YUH A CHANCE TO BE A MAN! YOU'VE GOT A GUN AT YER SIDE, WHY DON'T YOU USE IT?? OR ARE YOU JES GONNA LET ME TELL THESE PEOPLE WHAT YOU REALLY ARE.. A YELLOW-BELLIED COYOTE... A NOBODY!

THIS TIME ACE WASN'T GOING TO WAIT TILL THEY GOT OUTSIDE! HE WAS GOING FOR HIS GUN NOW!
HE WON'T EVEN OUTDRAW ME THIS TIME! I'M FASTER NOW THAN I EVER WAS!
MAKE YER PLAY!!
I DID IT! I OUTDREW 'IM!!
BLAM
THEN SUDDENLY, THINGS GOT ALL MIXED-UP! THE MEN IN THE SALOON WEREN'T CONGRATULATING ACE THIS TIME. INSTEAD THEY WERE OUT TO GET HIM!
WHA-?
QUICK! GRAB 'IM! HE JUST SHOT JEB HARTLEY.. IN COLD BLOOD!!
HE'S DEAD!
YORE GONNA STAND TRIAL FOR MURDER FRIEND!
YOU WON'T GIT OUT OF IT THAT WAY, HOMBRE! WE ALL SAW WHAT HAPPENED!
N-NO WAIT! HE PULLED A GUN ON ME!
BESIDES, JEB HARTLEY NEVER CARRIED AN IRON IN HIS LIFE!
ACE EVANS HAD JUST RECEIVED THE ONE BRAVE MOMENT OF HIS LIFE. BUT THOSE AROUND HIM KNEW NOTHING OF THIS! AS FAR AS THEY WERE CONCERNED, ACE WAS NOTHING BUT A BASE COWARD!
NO! I'M INNOCENT! I DIDN'T MEAN TO SHOOT H.M!
THE END

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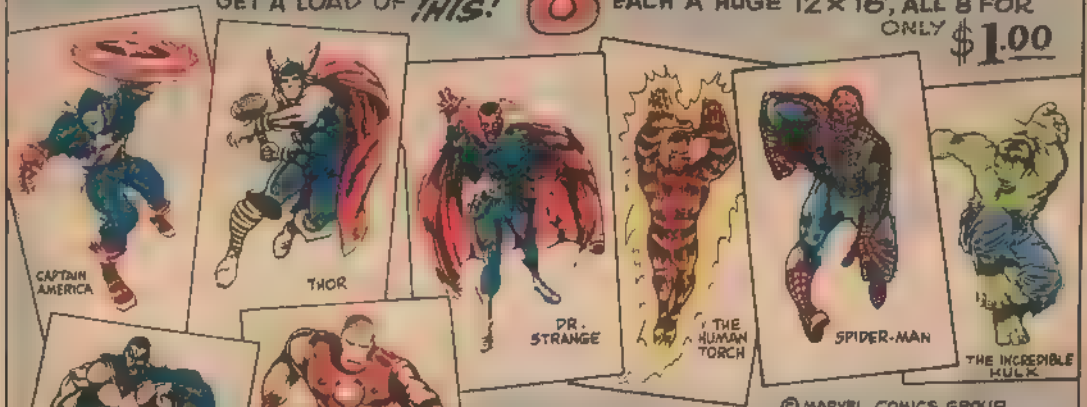


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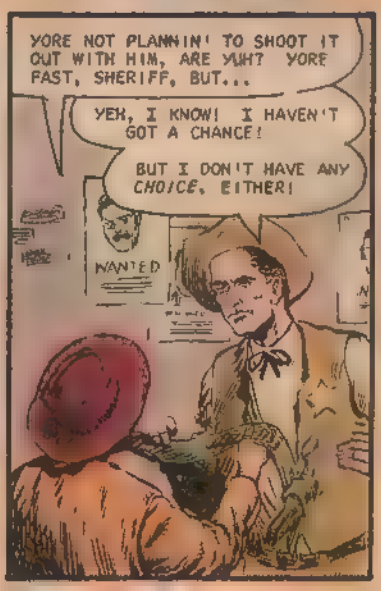
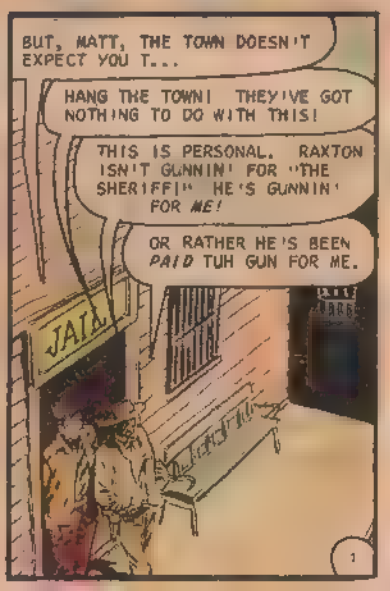
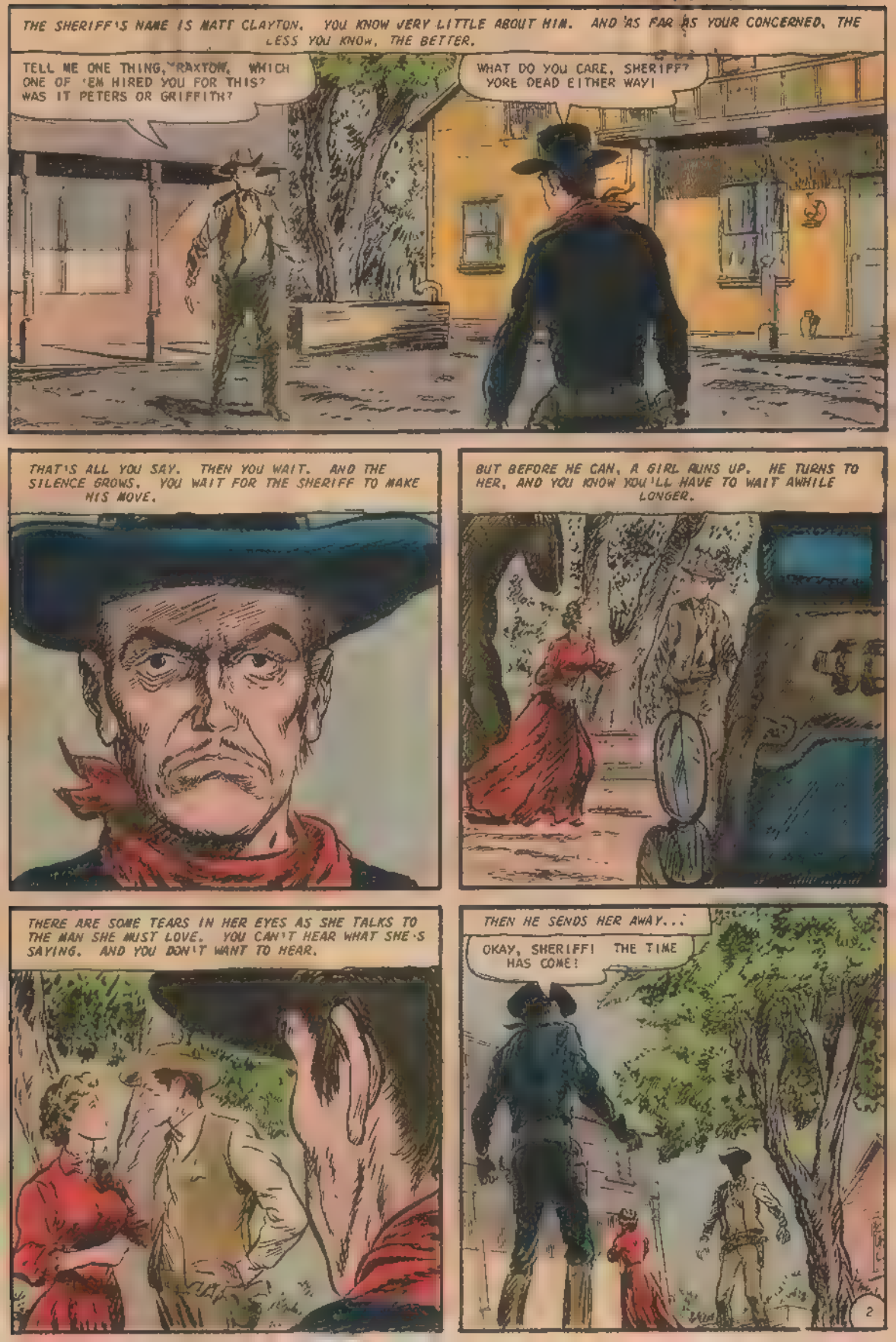
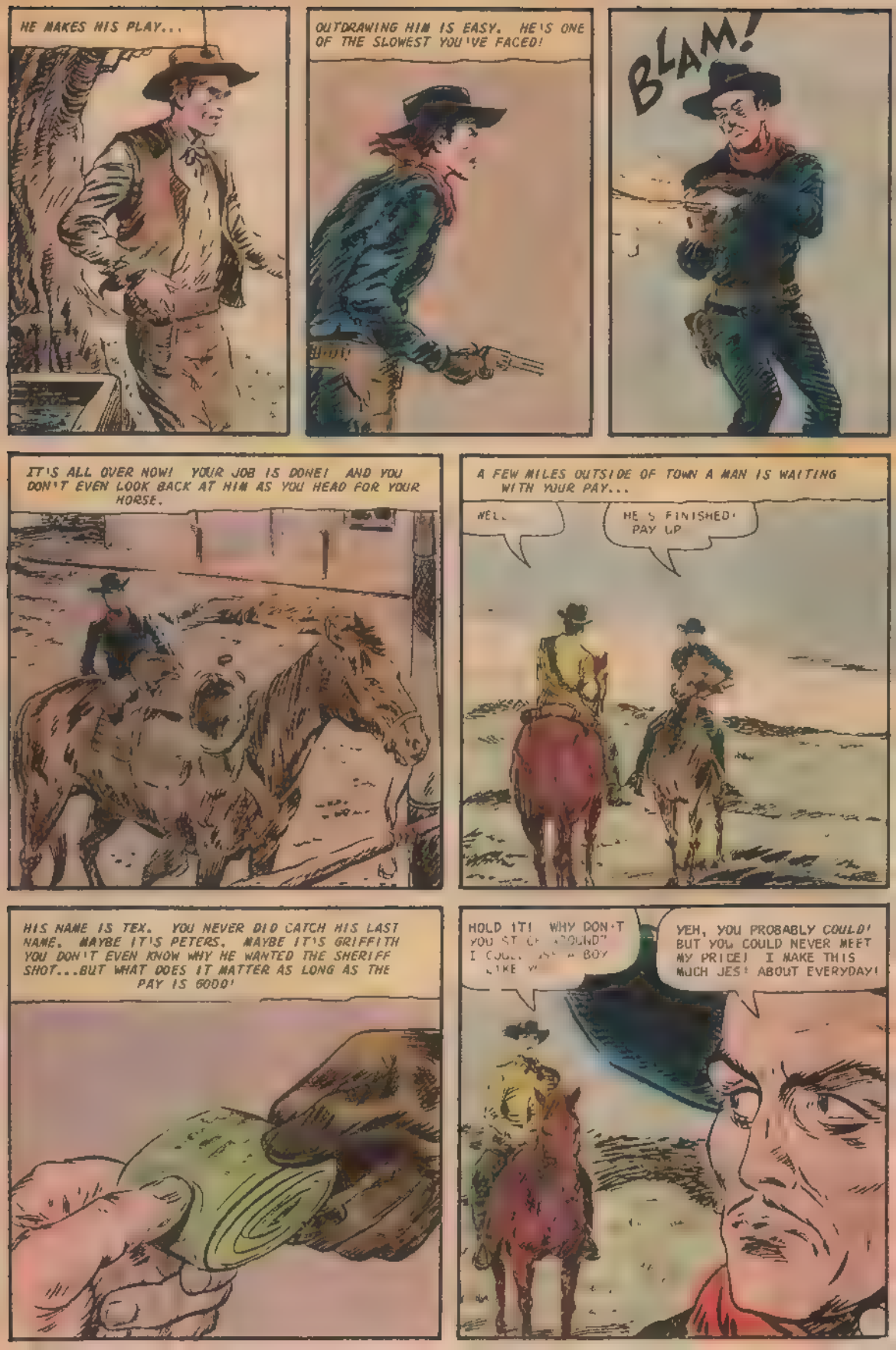
# THE HIRED GUN

YOU CREATE QUITE A STIR AS YOU RIDE INTO TOWN! ALL HEADS TURN YOUR WAY...THEN ONE MAN STARTS RUNNING OFF. AND YOU KNOW RIGHT WHERE HE'S HEADING!


YORE NOT PLANNIN' TO SHOOT IT OUT WITH HIM, ARE YUH? YORE FAST, SHERIFF, BUT...
YEH, I KNOW! I HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE!
BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY *CHOICE*, EITHER!
WANTED

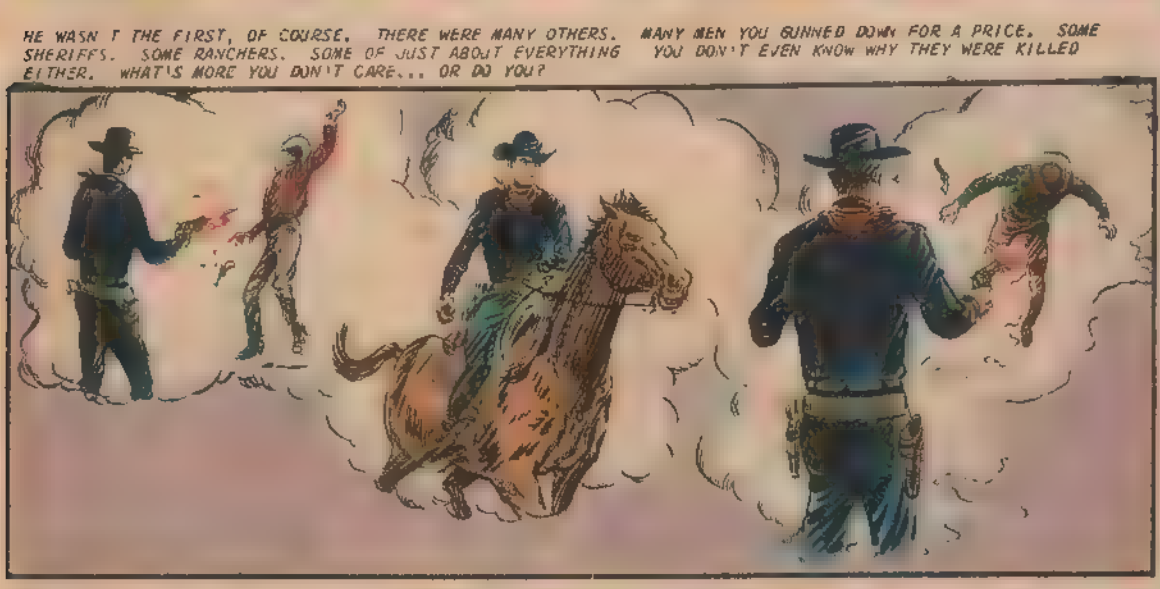

BUT, MATT, THE TOWN DOESN'T EXPECT YOU T...
HANG THE TOWN! THEY'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!
THIS IS PERSONAL. RAXTON ISN'T GUNNIN' FOR "THE SHERIFF!" HE'S GUNNIN' FOR *ME!*
OR RATHER HE'S BEEN *PAID* TUH GUN FOR ME.
JAIL
1


THE SHERIFF'S NAME IS MATT CLAYTON. YOU KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIM. AND AS FAR AS YOUR CONCERNED, THE LESS YOU KNOW, THE BETTER.
TELL ME ONE THING, CRAXTON. WHICH ONE OF 'EM HIRED YOU FOR THIS? WAS IT PETERS OR GRIFFITH?
WHAT DO YOU CARE, SHERIFF? YORE DEAD EITHER WAY!
THAT'S ALL YOU SAY. THEN YOU WAIT. AND THE SILENCE GROWS. YOU WAIT FOR THE SHERIFF TO MAKE HIS MOVE.
BUT BEFORE HE CAN, A GIRL RUNS UP. HE TURNS TO HER, AND YOU KNOW YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT AWHILE LONGER.
THERE ARE SOME TEARS IN HER EYES AS SHE TALKS TO THE MAN SHE MUST LOVE. YOU CAN'T HEAR WHAT SHE'S SAYING. AND YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR.
THEN HE SENDS HER AWAY...
OKAY, SHERIFF! THE TIME HAS COME!
2


HE MAKES HIS PLAY...
OUTDRAWING HIM IS EASY. HE'S ONE OF THE SLOWEST YOU'VE FACED!
BLAM!
IT'S ALL OVER NOW! YOUR JOB IS DONE! AND YOU DON'T EVEN LOOK BACK AT HIM AS YOU HEAD FOR YOUR HORSE.
A FEW MILES OUTSIDE OF TOWN A MAN IS WAITING WITH YOUR PAY...
WELL...
HE'S FINISHED! PAY UP
HIS NAME IS TEX. YOU NEVER DID CATCH HIS LAST NAME. MAYBE IT'S PETERS. MAYBE IT'S GRIFFITH YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY HE WANTED THE SHERIFF SHOT...BUT WHAT DOES IT MATTER AS LONG AS THE PAY IS GOOD!
HOLD IT! WHY DON'T YOU STICK AROUND" I COULD USE A BOY LIKE Y
YEH, YOU PROBABLY COULD! BUT YOU COULD NEVER MEET MY PRICE! I MAKE THIS MUCH JES' ABOUT EVERYDAY!

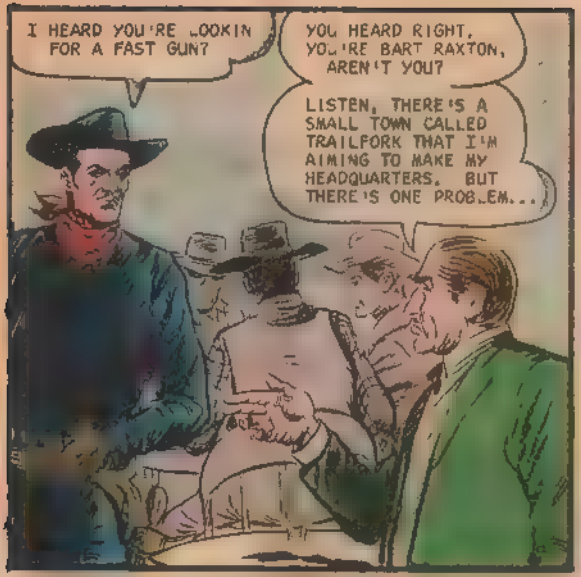
AND RIGHT NOW, I'VE HEARD THERE S SOMEONE IN DADE CITY WHO MAY WANT TO BUY MY SERVICES!

IT S ALL OVER NOW! A MAN IS DEAD, AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY HE HAD TO DIE!


HE WASN T THE FIRST, OF COURSE. THERE WERE MANY OTHERS. MANY MEN YOU GUNNED DOWN FOR A PRICE. SOME SHERIFFS. SOME RANCHERS. SOME OF JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY THEY WERE KILLED EITHER. WHAT'S MORE YOU DON'T CARE... OR DO YOU?

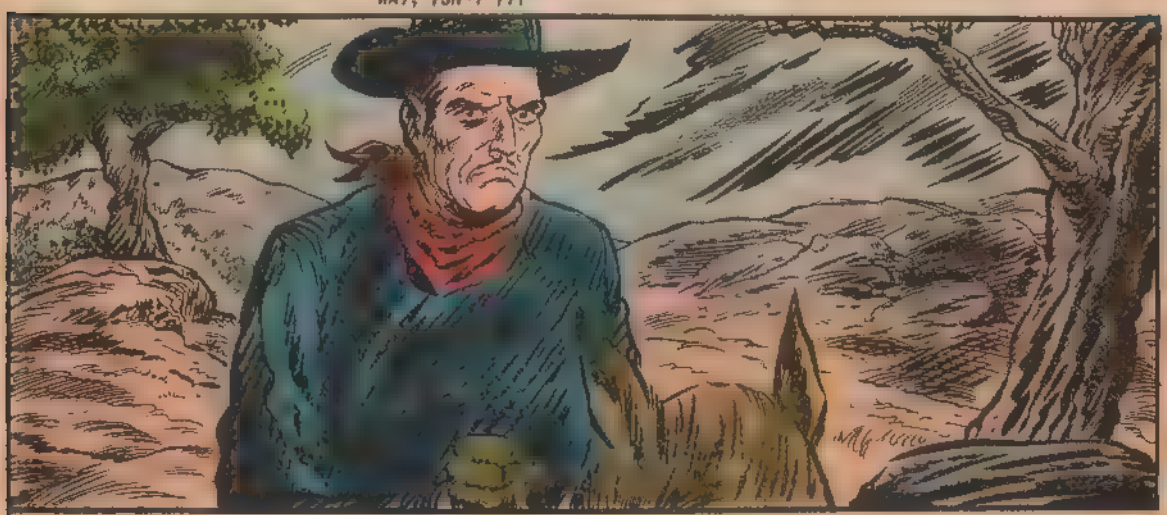
AND NOW WHO S NEXT? WHO WILL YOU SHOOT NEXT?
WELCOM TO DADE CITY

I'M LOOKING FOR A MAN NAMED JAKE MARVIN!
OVER HERE, MISTER!


I HEARD YOU'RE LOOKIN FOR A FAST GUN?
YOU HEARD RIGHT, YOU'RE BART RAXTON, AREN'T YOU?
LISTEN, THERE'S A SMALL TOWN CALLED TRAILFORK THAT I'M AIMING TO MAKE MY HEADQUARTERS. BUT THERE'S ONE PROBLEM...

SKIP THE DETAILS. JUST TELL ME THE MAN'S NAME AND HOW MUCH YOU'RE PAYIN'!
SUIT YOURSELF IT'S THE SHERIFF OF THE TOWN, CHET FARGO! I WANT HIM OUT OF THE WAY!
AND AS FOR THE PAY...

SO-- IT'S ANOTHER SHERIFF! SOMETIMES IT HAPPENS THIS WAY! THE JOB RUNS IN SPURTS. FIRST THREE SHERIFFS, THAN A COUPLE OF RANCHERS, AND THEN ANOTHER STRING OF LAWMEN. FUNNY, HOW IT HAPPENS THIS WAY, ISN'T IT?



AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, THE ROAD TO TRAILFORK LEADS YOU THROUGH A SMALL TOWN CALLED BELMONT FALLS. NOT MUCH OF A TOWN BUT THIS WAS WHERE YOU WERE BORN...

THE PEOPLE HERE GIVE YOU THE SAME LOOK THAT EVERYONE ELSE DOES. FOLKS WHO WERE ONCE YOUR FRIENDS ARE NOW AFRAID YOU'VE COME TO GET ONE OF THEM..

YOU DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHY, BUT YOU DECIDE TO STOP OFF FOR AWHILE...AT THE SALOON!

THE BARKEEP TRIES TO ACT FRIENDLY, BUT HE'S JUST AS SCARED AS EVERYONE ELSE.

BART...HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN QUITE AWHILE! WHAT BRINGS YOU TO TOWN?

DON'T FRET. I'M JUST PASSIN' THROUGH!

MAKE IT 'THE USUAL,' HUH? WHAT I ALWAYS USED TUH HAVE!

YOU DOWN YOUR DRINK FAST. YOU DON'T KNOW WHY YOU STOPPED HERE AND NOW YOU'RE SORRY YOU DID! THE WHOLE PLACE MAKES YOU SICK! YOU WANT TO GET OUT --FAST!

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE GETTING OLD. MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU STOPPED. MAYBE YOU'RE BEGINNING TO WISH YOU HAD A HOME. YOU'RE OUT ON THE TRAIL NOW AND YOU START THINKING BACK. YOU START SEEING FACES OF THE MEN WHO WERE ONCE YOUR FRIENDS.

THEN YOU TRY TO THINK OF A GIRL YOU ONCE KNEW... A GIRL NAMED JENNY. BUT ALL YOU CAN VISUALIZE IS THE TEARSTAINED FACE OF THE GIRL WHO LOVED THE LAST MAN YOU SHOT...

SO YOU PUT IT ALL OUT OF YOUR MIND, AND TRY TO CONCENTRATE ON YOUR JOB...AND BEFORE LONG YOU'RE THERE!

TRAILFORK! IT AIN'T MUCH BIGGER THAN BELMONT FALLS!



CONTINUED AFTER THE NEXT PAGE

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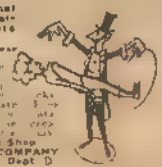

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NOW IT'S STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN MAYBE THE PERSONALITIES OF THE OTHER PLAYERS ARE A BIT DIFFERENT. BUT THE SCENE'S THE SAME AS FAR AS YOU'RE CONCERNED!
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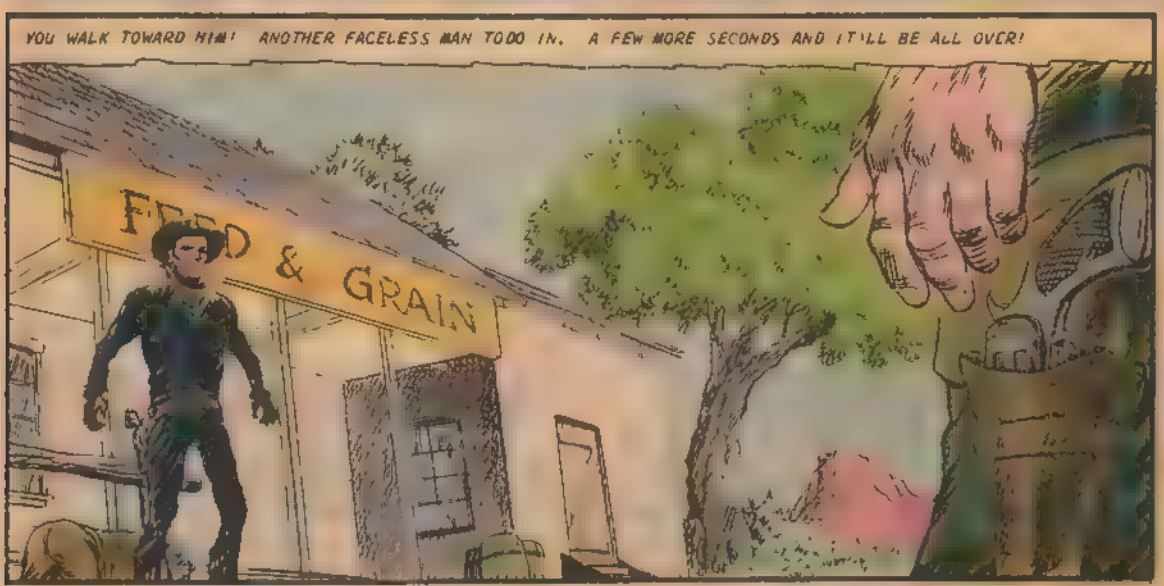
I TELL YUH I SEEN 'IM! HE'S OUT THERE!
HMM. JAKE MARVIN MUSTA SENT HIM---TUH GET ME!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO HANDLE THIS!
YORE NOT GONNA SHOOT IT OUT WITH 'IM, ARE YUH, SHERIFF? YUH WON'T STAND A CHANCE!
I'LL HAVE A CHANCE! I KNOW JES' HOW TO HANDLE THIS!
YOU'RE WAITING NOW--WAITING FOR THE SHERIFF TO COME OUT!
YORE BART RAXTON, AIN'T YUH? YOU COME FOR THE SHERIFF?
YEH! YEH! WHAT'S IT TO YUH, OLD-TIMER?
YORE GONNA NEED ALL THE INFORMATION YOU CAN GIT ABOUT THE SHERIFF! I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING FOR THE PRICE OF A DRINK!
BACK OFF, MISTER! I DON'T NEED TUH KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.
JAIL

BUT, YOU DON T UNDERST...
I SAID BACK OFF!-- AND I MEAN IT!
SMACK!

YOU RE STARTING TO GET RESTLESS NOW! YOU RE WONDERING WHAT S TAKING THE SHERIFF SO LONG. THEN FINALLY...
HERE HE COMES...


YOU WALK TOWARD HIM! ANOTHER FACELESS MAN TODO IN. A FEW MORE SECONDS AND IT'LL BE ALL OVER!
FEED & GRAIN

BUT SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME. THIS MAN IS MORE CONFIDENT THAN THE OTHERS. AND WHY IS HE TAKING SO LONG BEFORE HE GOES FOR HIS GUN?
WHAT ARE YUH WAITIN' FOR?? GO FOR YORE IRON, YUH FOOL!!

THEN YOU HEAR IT! A DISTINCTIVE CLICK FROM THE ALLEYWAY BEHIND YOU!
WHA-?

THE DISTINCTIVE CLICK OF A RIFLE BEING COCKED! YOU WHIRL AROUND-- FAST!!

-- A BUSHWHACKER!!

BUT IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE! BOTH THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE AND THE SHERIFF FIRE AT THE SAME TIME! AND IT'S ALL OVER!

UNH!

CRAK

KRAK

KRAK

YES, THE SHERIFF PLANNED IT THIS WAY. ALL THE OTHERS YOU FACED WERE HONEST MEN! THIS WAS THE ONE THING YOU DIDN'T COUNT ON! A "VICTIM" AS LOW AS YOU!

I TRIED TUH WARN HIM ABOUT THE SHERIFF, BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN!

YOU MEAN YOU TRIED TO *SELL* HIM THE INFORMATION! YOU'D SELL *ANYTHING* FOR THE PRICE OF A DRINK!

I DON'T GET IT! IT WAS LIKE HE DIDN'T *WANT* TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE SHERIFF!

YEAH...WELL, MAYBE THAT'S THE ONLY WAY HIS KIND CAN LIVE WITH THEMSELVES... IT'S PROBABLY EASIER TO ACCEPT THE KILLINGS WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE MEN YOU'VE SHOT!

BUT THIS TIME THAT LITTLE FACT SPELLED THIS GUNSLINGER'S FINISH!

END

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